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Chapter 5. NASA Honor Awards Program

5.1 Background

Agency Honor Awards are NASA's most prestigious honor awards. They are approved by the Chair of the IAB and presented to a number of carefully selected individuals and groups of individuals, both Government and non-Government, who have distinguished themselves by making outstanding contributions to the Agency's mission. Recognition should be extended to deserving candidates from NASA's total workforce. Incumbents of all occupational groups and all grade levels are eligible in accordance with the individual award criteria.

5.2 Eligibility

5.2.1 Jet Propulsion Laboratory employees are eligible for Government employee awards under the NASA Honor Awards Program.

5.2.2 Individuals working for NASA under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) are treated as employees and are eligible for Agency Honor Awards.

5.2.3 NASA employees and employees of other Federal agencies may be nominated for the following awards:

- a. Distinguished Service Medal.
- b. Outstanding Leadership Medal.
- c. Exceptional Achievement Medal.
- d. Exceptional Service Medal.
- e. Exceptional Scientific Achievement Medal.

- f. Exceptional Engineering Achievement Medal.
- g. Equal Employment Opportunity Medal.
- h. Exceptional Bravery Medal.
- i. Exceptional Technology Achievement Medal.
- j. Exceptional Administrative Achievement Medal.
- k. Space Flight Medal.
- l. Group Achievement Award.
- m. Certificate of Appreciation.

5.2.4 Non-Government personnel may be nominated for the following awards:

- a. Distinguished Public Service Medal.
- b. Exceptional Scientific Achievement Medal.
- c. Exceptional Technology Achievement Medal.
- d. Exceptional Engineering Achievement Medal.
- e. Exceptional Public Service Medal.
- f. Equal Employment Opportunity Medal.
- g. Exceptional Bravery Medal.
- h. Public Service Group Achievement Award.
- i. Group Achievement Award.
- j. Certificate of Appreciation.

5.3 Description of NASA Honor Awards

5.3.1 Distinguished Service Medal (DSM)--Is awarded to any individual in the Federal service who, by distinguished service, ability, or courage has personally made a contribution representing substantial progress to the NASA mission in the interest of the United States. The contribution must have been so extraordinary that other forms of recognition by NASA would be inadequate. This is the highest honor that NASA confers.

5.3.2 Distinguished Public Service Medal (DPSM)--Is awarded to any individual who is not an employee of the Federal Government or was not a Government employee during the period in which the service was performed. The award is granted only to individuals whose distinguished accomplishments contributed substantially to the NASA mission. The contribution must have been so extraordinary that other forms of recognition by NASA would be inadequate. This is the highest honor that NASA confers on a non-Government individual.

5.3.3 Outstanding Leadership Medal (OLM)--Is awarded for notably outstanding leadership that affects technical or administrative programs of NASA at an organizational, directorate, Agency, Government, or industry level. It is awarded for the sustained contributions of a leader's effectiveness in advancing the Agency's quality result and building the organization's capacity for future performance while exemplifying NASA values in the work environment. The criteria are as follows:

- a. Demonstrated excellence in leadership performance.
- b. Consistent and exemplary behavior that models NASA's core values and promotes these values within the Agency.
- c. Complexity of effort in terms of projects, organizations, or a wide range of personnel.
- d. Innovative approaches used in the conception, design, or execution of projects, programs, initiatives, and activities.

e. Impact and importance of work achievements to NASA's missions and the image that is created by the individual's contributions and efforts.

5.3.4 Exceptional Achievement Medal (EAM)--Is awarded to any individual in the Federal service for a significant, specific accomplishment or substantial improvement in operations, efficiency, service, financial savings, science, or technology which contributes to NASA's mission. The criteria are as follows:

- a. Work-related achievements yielding high-quality results and/or substantial improvement that support NASA's mission or organizational accomplishment.
- b. Innovative approaches used in the conception, design, or execution of the individual's work.
- c. Impact and importance of the individual's achievement to the NASA Mission Directorate's, Center's, or organizational component's goals and image.

5.3.5 Exceptional Service Medal (ESM)--Is awarded for significant, sustained performance characterized by unusual initiative or creative ability that clearly demonstrates substantial improvements or contributions in engineering, aeronautics, spaceflight, administration, support, or space-related endeavors that contribute to NASA's mission. The criteria are as follows:

- a. Excellence and recognition of achievement that has set a benchmark for which others may strive.
- b. An innovative approach used in the conception, design, or execution of the Agency's projects, programs, initiatives, and activities.
- c. Impact and importance of the individual's service to NASA's mission and image.

5.3.6 Exceptional Scientific Achievement Medal (ESAM)--Is awarded to both Government and non-Government individuals for an unusually significant scientific contribution toward achieving NASA's mission. This award may be given for individual efforts that have resulted in a contribution of fundamental importance in this field or have significantly enhanced the understanding of this field. The criteria are as follows:

- a. Accomplishments are far above others in quality or excellence--a rare, outstanding, clearly superior achievement.
- b. This is a prestigious scientific award for specific, concrete scientific achievement(s). (More credit will be given for recent contribution(s), except in unusual circumstances where a contribution was overlooked at the time it occurred.)

5.3.7 Exceptional Engineering Achievement Medal (EEAM)--Is awarded to both Government and non-Government individuals for unusually significant engineering contributions toward achieving NASA's mission. This award may be given for individual efforts or application of engineering principles/methods that have resulted in contributions of fundamental importance in this field or have significantly enhanced the understanding of this field. The criteria are as follows:

- a. Accomplishments are far above others in quality, scope, and impact.
- b. Accomplishments are explicit, demonstrate results, and are perceived as outstanding or significant by peers and impacted targeted groups. (More credit will be given for

recent contribution(s) except in unusual circumstances wherein a contribution was overlooked at the time it occurred.)

5.3.8 Equal Employment Opportunity Medal (EEOM)--Is awarded to both Government and non-Government individuals for outstanding achievement and material contribution to the goals of NASA's Equal Employment Opportunity Programs either within the Government or within community organizations or groups. The criteria are as follows:

- a. Accomplishments are clearly superior in quality, scope, and impact.
- b. Accomplishments are explicit, demonstrate results, and are perceived as outstanding or significant by peers and impacted target groups. (More credit will be given for recent contribution(s) except in unusual circumstances wherein a contribution was overlooked at the time it occurred.)

5.3.9 Exceptional Technology Achievement Medal (ETAM)--Is awarded to both Government and non-Government individuals for technology contributions achieved in one of the following areas:

- a. Early technology development significantly contributing to NASA's mission.
- b. Exemplary collaborative effort in achieving significant technology transfer.
- c. Exceptional utilization of a NASA-developed technology resulting in a significant commercial application.

5.3.10 Exceptional Administrative Achievement Medal (EAAM)--Is awarded to any individual in the Federal service (NASA Classification 500 Group clerical/assistant and related support positions only) for a significant, specific accomplishment or contribution characterized by unusual initiative or creativity that clearly demonstrates a substantial improvement in administrative support contributing to NASA's mission. The criteria are as follows:

- a. Exceptional initiative in carrying out office/program support activities that resulted in improved processes and operations.
- b. Development and improvement of administrative support methods and processes that resulted in substantial benefit to the office or program.
- c. Notable competence and resourcefulness in accomplishing and improving office/program processes and operations.

5.3.11 Exceptional Bravery Medal (EBM)--Is awarded to both Government and non-Government individuals for exemplary and courageous handling of an emergency by an individual who, independent of personal danger, has acted to prevent the loss of human life and/or Government property.

5.3.12 Exceptional Public Service Medal (EPSM)--Is awarded to any individual who was not a Government employee during the period in which the service was performed. The award is given for exceptional contributions to NASA's mission.

5.3.13 Space Flight Medal (SFM)--Is awarded to Space Transportation System (STS) flight crewmembers (civil and military astronauts, mission specialists, payload specialists, and civilians) to recognize individual participation in an STS flight mission. The medal is granted for participation in initial flight. The NASA Space Flight Cluster is awarded for subsequent flight(s).

5.3.14 Group Achievement Award (GAA)--Is awarded to either a group of Government employees or a group comprised of both Government and non-Government personnel for an outstanding accomplishment through the coordination of many individual efforts which have contributed substantially to NASA's mission, with explicit consideration given to: (1) the quality of results and the level of impact on NASA's programs or operations; (2) effective management of cost and schedule; (3) customer satisfaction; (4) team growth and capacity for future contribution; and (5) additional credit for development of innovative approaches, use of and contributions to lessons-learned data banks, and/or success in responding to unforeseen crises.

5.3.15 Public Service Group Achievement Award (PSGAA)--Is awarded to a group of non-Government personnel for an outstanding accomplishment while participating in a significant program or project that has contributed substantially to NASA's mission, with explicit consideration given to: (1) the quality of results and the level of impact on NASA's programs or operations; (2) effective management of cost and schedule; (3) customer satisfaction; and (4) additional credit for development of innovative approaches and/or success in responding to unforeseen crises.

5.3.16 Certificate of Appreciation (COA)--Is awarded to both Government and non-government individuals in recognition of outstanding accomplishment which has contributed substantially to NASA's mission.

5.4 Annual Call for Nominations

5.4.1 An annual call for nominations will be released to all Center Directors and Officials-in-Charge of Headquarters Offices in July.

5.4.2 Nominations will be submitted to the NSSC through the NAAS during the period beginning October 1 through November 1 each year. All nominations must be received by the NSSC no later than November 1.

5.4.3 Numerical Allocations

a. For determining allocations, Center Incentive Awards Officers will inform the NSSC by June 1 of the number of on-site and near-site contractor workforce as of May 30. For Centers where the contractor workforce baseline is less than 2,000, a maximum of two noncivil service medals are allocated.

b. The civil service workforce is the number of on-duty employees (includes part-time and full-time permanent, terms, and interns; excludes employees on LWOP, student and temporary appointments).

c. The contractor workforce is comprised of each Center's on-site and near-site prime and support service contractor workforce (within 20 miles). Contractor workforce located outside the 20-mile radius also includes the Wallops Flight Facility, the NASA Independent Verification & Validation Facility, and the Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

d. A Center's numerical allocation will be downwardly adjusted to reflect any out-of-cycle medals awarded during the period October 1 through September 30 (see out-of-cycle Honor Awards process at 5.6).

e. Using the workforce strength and contractor workforce data as of May 30, the NSSC

will determine and inform the Centers of their numerical allocations for DSMs, DPSMs, ESMs, EAMs, and EPSMs by July 1.

5.4.4 Numerical guidelines will be determined as follows:

- a. For civil service nominations: 1.5 percent of the permanent and term civil service population.
- b. For contractor nominations: 0.1 percent of the full-time, on-site and near-site, prime and support service contractor workforce.
- c. All fractions are rounded to the nearest whole number.
- d. Centers have the discretion to use civil service allocations for non-civil service nominations and vice versa.
- e. Centers will not submit nominations in excess of their numerical allocations for covered medals.

5.5 Expert Panels and Evaluation of Nominees

5.5.1 Expert Panels and the evaluation of nominations for OLMs, ESAMs, EEAMs, ETAMs, EAAMs, and EEOMs apply to the Agency-level evaluation process. These nominations will be reviewed by a panel of experts in their category to determine which of the nominees' accomplishments are sufficiently significant to warrant receipt of the respective medal.

5.5.2 The NSSC will coordinate the selection of the Chairs of the Expert Panels and receive their proposed nominations through the NAAS.

5.5.2.1 The Chair of the IAB names the Chair of the OLM Panel.

5.5.2.2 The Associate Administrator for the Science Mission Directorate names the Chairs of the ESAM and ETAM Panels.

5.5.2.3 The Chief Engineer names the Chair of the EEAM Panel.

5.5.2.4 The Executive Director for the Office of Headquarters Operations names the Chair of the EAAM Panel.

5.5.2.5 The Assistant Administrator for Diversity and Equal Opportunity names the Chair of the EEOM Panel.

5.5.3 Panel Membership

5.5.3.1 The Chairs of the Expert Panels will select their Panel's members from NASA and/or other Government employees. With the exception of the OLM Panel, the size of the panel is at the discretion of the Chair.

5.5.4 **OLM Panel**

5.5.4.1 The OLM Panel will include those Center Directors and Associate Administrators of Mission Directorates who are not members of the IAB.

5.5.4.2 The Chair of the OLM Panel is named by the Chair of the IAB.

Center OLM Panel Representation - Center Director

(or designee)

2009	2010	2011	2012
GRC	MSFC	HQ	ARC
JSC	JPL	GSFC	KSC
MSFC	HQ	ARC	SSC
JPL	GSFC	KSC	LaRC
HQ	ARC	SSC	DFRC

**Mission Directorate OLM Panel Representation - Associate Administrator
(or designee)**

SMD	SOMD	SOMD	SMD
ARMD	ESMD	ESMD	ARMD

5.5.5 Evaluation of Nominees

5.5.5.1 The criteria used to evaluate nominees is also used to describe the medals listed in paragraph 5.3. The Chairs of the Panels will direct their panel members on how to apply the medal criteria.

5.5.5.2 The Chair of the Panels will record the reasons why any nominee is not recommended for receipt of the medal. These reasons will be recorded in NAAS and shared with the nominating Center.

5.5.5.3 There is no reclama process for nominees rejected by an expert panel.

5.5.5.4 Centers may, at their discretion, nominate a nominee rejected by a panel for a medal covered by an allocation, provided their allocation ceiling is not exceeded or, if exceeded, they withdraw another nomination in order to stay within their allocation.

5.5.5.5 The NSSC will set the deadline for any adjustments to nominations covered by allocations.

5.5.5.6 Chairs of Expert Panels will not recommend nominees for other medals.

5.6 Out-Of-Cycle Agency Honor Awards

5.6.1 Requests for NASA Honor Awards outside the annual call for nominations will be rare and based on extraordinary circumstances that warrant an out-of-cycle review.

5.6.2 All requests must include a detailed explanation and justification of the reasons why the honor award must be presented outside the annual cycle. A situation created by an individual retiring, resigning, or otherwise not being available for the ceremony is not, under most circumstances, adequate justification for an out-of-cycle review.

5.6.3 All requests must be signed by the Center Director or Official-in-Charge of a Headquarters Office and be approved by the Chair of the IAB.

5.6.4 All Distinguished Service Medals, Distinguished Public Service Medals, Exceptional Service Medals, Exceptional Achievement Medals, and Exceptional Public Service Medals awarded out-of-cycle during the fiscal year will be deducted from the Center's or Headquarters' numerical allocation for that award year (see paragraph 5.4.3.d). Center and Headquarters Incentive Awards Officers will monitor and account for all approved out-of-cycle awards and reduce their annual Honor Awards submission by that number.

5.6.5 Requests for Outstanding Leadership Medals, Exceptional Scientific Achievement Medals, Exceptional Engineering Achievement Medals, Exceptional Technology Achievement Medals, Equal Employment Opportunity Medals, and Exceptional Administrative Achievement Medals will not be reviewed by an expert panel as they are during the annual Honor Awards process. Therefore, a request for one of these medals must be based on such clearly exceptional accomplishments related to the award criteria that a panel review is unnecessary.

5.6.6 Center Incentive Awards Program Officers will personally review all requests for out-of-cycle awards from their Center or Headquarters and certify that all of the requirements in this guidance have been met. This review and certification may not be redelegated.

5.6.7 The OHCM will review all requests for out-of-cycle awards for compliance with this guidance and then forward, with a recommendation, to the Chair of the IAB for decision and approval.

5.6.8 If approved, the Center Incentive Awards Program Officer will submit, when appropriate, and approve the nomination in the NAAS.

5.6.9 After successful completion of a Shuttle or Expedition flights mission, a written request from the Director of Human Resources of the Johnson Space Center may request out-of-cycle awards to the OHCM for the Shuttle and International Space Station crewmembers and Lead Flight Directors. A Decision Memorandum dated November 22, 2006, signed by the Deputy Administrator, preapproves this request. The Center Incentive Awards Program Officer will submit and approve the nomination in the NAAS.

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